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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

An execution plan of a query for a parallel database system is determined. In one arrangement, the parallel database system is a relational database management system. The execution plan of the query is determined by an optimizer program. Execution plans are inserted into one or more explain tables that are accessible by a visual explain and compare module to display the steps of the execution plan in a graphical user interface. Parallel execution of steps of the execution plan can be deposited in the graphical user interface. Further, plural execution plans for a given query under different conditions may be displayed for comparison.